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LOCAL AGENCIES OF GOVERNMENT IN YUGOSLAVIA

Leon Gerskovic

The cities and villages represent the basic social and economic territorial units in Yugoslavia today. The srez, though administrative in character, also have a positive social and economic basis that is developing more and more. Factors contributing to the development of the srez as a social and economic unit include the reconstruction [i. e., collectivization] of agriculture, which will lead to the uniting of villages covering a large area into a single whole, and the decreasing dissimilarity between cities and villages as a result of the socialist reconstruction of the villages and the industrialization of agriculture. The srez, united with the cities, will then become social and economic units, regardless of whether they will be in accord with the present administrative srez.

The oblasts have a purely administrative character. They will continue for a certain period because of the curtailed administration from the capitals of the republics.

The elements of autonomy, that is, the participation of the masses in administration, should be developed as extensively as possible in the srez and the cities, and their agencies should be transformed into "unions of producers." In municipal people's councils, which in a sense already represent "united producers," as few agencies as possible should be created outside of those which the citizens set up themselves. This means that organizational structures should be developed through which the citizens themselves, and not officials or paid members of councils, can perform regulatory functions and participate in decisions.

The srez people's council is the backbone of the administrative organizations of the Yugoslav state today. The council's basic function is the socialist reconstruction of agriculture and the uniting of local industry and agriculture into one unit. Thus, from an administrative unit, the srez will become a social and economic unit regardless of whether it remains territorially unchanged or not. For the territorial outline of the srez is variable and closely connected with the removal of boundaries between villages and cities. Therefore, the srez people's councils need to have broader economic and organizational as well as regulatory functions.

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The administration of industrial and commercial enterprises can be organized in the same manner as in the cities (by uniting into economic agencies), but agriculture in the srez must be combined into an economic whole by forming co-operatives, without traces of capitalism.

In developing the structure of local agencies, particular care needs to be paid to the structure of the plenums of the lower people's councils. Up to the present, these activities have shown many tendencies toward parliamentarianism. The plenums have not developed into what Marx called a "legislative, united, executive, and working body." For the executive council, though it issued from the plenum and was answerable to it, has been too separate and independent, and the plenum has controlled it only periodically with parliamentary methods. The plenum itself has participated little in everyday activities; it has been a united and executive body only indirectly, through the executive council. The plenum has not been developing properly as a working body.

It is therefore necessary to discover forms that will enable plenums, through their various agencies (commissions, councils, council groups, etc.) to participate daily in the control of the activities of the executive agencies, examine the various happenings and propose solutions, aid the activities of agencies in which the citizens participate, and bring its own problems before the plenum, insofar as possible. The plenum further needs to change from a passive agency, which only listens to reports and accountings, to a true management agency which unites the legislative and executive functions and becomes a working body.

Various organizational measures need to be taken in this direction. All appearances of bureaucratic centralization in the srez and municipalities need to be destroyed and conditions developed so that the srez will consist of villages united into economic units on a democratic basis.

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